West Asheville Oral History

Mrs. Louise Hudgens

Mrs. Elizabeth Conley

March 12, 1999

Interviewer: Rob Neufeld

INTERVIEW WITH LOUISE HUDGENS AND ELIZABETH CONLEY
AT LOUISE HUDGENS' HOUSE
Friday, March 12, 1999
Interviewer: Rob Neufeld for West Asheville Library History Project

Rob: Your parents names were...

LH: My parents were Lasker and Doshia Bell, Doshia Wilson Bell. My mother voted when she was 90. She wanted to vote, and so they called me. This was in the paper. Here it is. Voted at 90, I wrote that on there--Doshia Bell voted at 90, and I had pictures made for all the children. This is my family.

Rob: Glad you have so many photos.

LH: Oh, goodness, I'm loaded.

Rob: Loaded with photos.

LH: That's my daughter, her husband, and her two children. He's 18 now, in college; and she's 16. They're all I got. She said, "Mama, love these two all you can because these are all you're going to get." This is my mother.

Rob: Her name again was...how do you spell that?

LH: Doshia Wilson Bell. And Lasker Carson Bell. And this is my mother when she was 90...She said she wanted to vote and they told me to be there by 8 o'clock and get her.

Rob: What year was this?

LH: I don't know. Mama was born 1890, I guess.

Rob: So this is a photo of her voting in 1980.

LH: She voted. She said, "I want to vote!"

Rob: Why did she want to vote so bad?

LH: [She voted]...where Aycock School is over here. She was in the nursing home up here...up near A-B Tech. Here she is when she was in the nursing home. There she is with my daddy.

Rob: Where were they born?

LH: They were born in Buncombe County. My mother was born in the Leicester township....He was West Buncombe and she was East Buncombe. I heard her say, "you know, you used to walk to see me." You know, he used to go out from Weaverville to Leicester to see

her.

Rob: So, he was born in Weaverville. Do you know exactly where?

LH: They used to take me out when I was little to see where I was born. I was the only one that was born in Weaverville. Three of us were born right here in this house.

Rob: But you were born in Weaverville?

LH: Uh-huh. We just say Buncombe County.

Rob: How come?

Louise: I don't know.

Rob: How old were you when they took you out there?

LH: I was born there.

Rob: You said they took you back there to see the home in which you were born?

LH: Oh, I don't know. I was young.

Rob: You moved out of there about when? You were how old?

LH: I was about four or five because I went to kindergarten. I lived at my grandmother's. It was called Dusenberry's Kindergarten, I believe.

Rob: Here in this area?

LH: On Eagle Street.

Rob: When you all moved out, you moved to here?

LH: No, my mother and father moved to Petersburg, Virginia. I had two sisters who were born in Petersburg--the one in the nursing home and the one...let's see, I have pictures here. The reason I had to go stay at my grandfather's [her great-grandfather, called grandfather], with my grandmother. This is her father, I had to take care of him. And she would go to work every day and leave me there to give him his meals. That's grandfather--he's great-grandfather to us. That's my grandmother's father.

Rob: This is a fabulous photo. When was this photo taken, do you think?

LH: He was 81 years old when he died.

Rob: This is a photo from...

LH: Hazzard Street. East Asheville, right above Martin Luther King Drive. That's where I lived with my grandmother when I was young. She sent me to kindergarten and...I came home and went up here to Bridge Street School to the elementary grades, and when I got to high school, my grandmother put me in Allen High School, and I stayed two years in the dormitory. I found two receipts in the basement. Fifteen dollars. I'm a dormitory student. That was a whole lot of money then. I stayed in Allen two years, and the sister next to me, the one who is in the nursing home now, she...Daddy wanted all of us to go to Allen. He said he didn't want us to go to the public schools.

Rob: How come?

LH: He thought it would be best for us. Allen was a private school.

Rob: Right. And was it also a school that had some special training for teachers?

LH: Yes. I went to college, but she wouldn't wait til I got out to start teaching, and she got a job that was offered to me.

Rob: She got a job that was offered to you?

LH: I don't want to say that.

Rob: What is her name?

LH: Edna Bell Ford.

Rob: Oh, I know Edna. I met Edna.

LH: Did you?

Rob: A few years ago. She's in a nursing home now?

LH: Elizabeth and I went to see her this morning.

Rob: So you have two sisters.

LH; Two living.

Rob: Edna and Elizabeth were both born in Petersburg, Virginia?

LH: No, Edna and Willie Mae. Where is Willie Mae, I have a picture.

Rob: And you got to stay with your grandparents.

LH: With my grandmother. My grandfather died when my mother was four years old. My grandmother had to rear her two children by herself.

Rob: Her name was what?

LH: Well, they said I was named for her, but I never was Lula and she never was Louise. They called her Lizzie and I don't know why. I said, Elizabeth would have been named for her. Anyway, everybody in Asheville knew her as Lizzie Archie because her second husband was an Archie.

Rob: So first Lizzy married a Wilson and then she married an Archie, but it was from Wilson that you were descended. What was Lizzy's maiden name?

LH: Parks. This is grandpa Parks.

Rob: So her father is the man in that picture? What is his name?

LH: His name is James Parks.

Rob: Doshia was born in 1890, then Lizzy was probably born around what--1860.

LH: They had children young then, around 18, 19 years old.

Rob: So James Parks was probably born around 1840.

LH: He has some grandchildren over here, living down here. The Gudger children are his grandchildren. There's Adelaide, Annie Kathleen, and Elsie. They're his grandchildren. But my grandmother was the oldest child. She kept her father, and, naturally, she kept me. I'm her grandchild. She came and got me to stay with her, help her sit with him while she was at work.

Rob: And your parents moved to Petersburg. It was hard for them to support as many kids as they had?

LH: No, they didn't have all the kids then. Luther Bell, he died about five months ago. He was a deacon up here in this church. He was the oldest child in the family.

Rob: He became a deacon of the church here?

LH: I found out later, I had to find out the year, I asked everybody who knew. He was ordained. The man who was the deacon in our church was transferred to East Asheville--Edward Rogers. I've got to find out the year they were ordained. I didn't even know it. See, I was away. I went to Allen and then from there to college.

Rob: I'm looking at this 5x7 black and white photo here of your great-grandfather. Who are the children in this picture?

LH: I don't know their names. I was so young.

Rob: Two children, a boy and a girl.

LH: That's his niece, I think, and these are greats.

Rob: What is that behind them? Is that their house in East Asheville?

LH: I don't know.

Rob: Let's talk about these portraits over here. Let's see who we have here.

LH: This is my grandfather.

Rob: This is Jack Wilson, whom Lizzy Wilson married.

LH: That's my mother's paternal father. These are my maternal grandparents.

Rob: Here she's called Lula Parks Wilson instead of Lizzy. How did you get these portraits?

LH: This is my mother's. It was left here. See, I'm in the home. It's the original home--it was until I had so much done to it. And this--I've never seen them. This is my grandparents. My daddy had these pictures. In fact, there are two or three of them around. This is the only one I had in a frame.

Rob: Your father's name was Lasker Carson Bell.

LH: His daddy's name was George.

Rob: Your grandmother's name?

LH: Her name was Annie because I'm named for her--I mean it's Annie Louise. I'm supposed to be named after her, the oldest girl, you know.

Rob: Do you know Annie's maiden name?

LH: She was a Weaver. One of those Weavers from out in Weaverville. You know how they came about.

Rob: So who was it that first came to West Asheville?

LH: E.W. Pearson, I don't know.

Rob: Who in your family first came?

LH: My daddy. He bought this place. We came here from over in East Asheville. That's where he lived. I'll tell you how we came, how my mother said. My daddy had a horse and buggy, and he had a wagon. My mother drove the buggy with the children in it and Daddy had the wagon. 85 years ago--more than that, because I'm 85 now. I started school up here at Burton Street at six years old. All these houses weren't on this street when we moved here. I forgot all that history. I don't know where it is now, where the paper is now, because I put it down, and I can't remember. I've been working on income tax. I've got a brick room back there you can't see for the papers. And I've had a girl here helping me.

From that corner right there was where you heard Iola Pearson Byers, the big girl, talk about the park. Her daddy was very energetic, and I think he wanted to be called the black mayor of West Asheville. He started about everything. I have to give him credit. He was a smart man. I learned later he was from Burke County where I taught for 25 years. That was a park out there. It was level. You can see a hill out there now, where the highway's up on a hill. I don't know how they got that dirt up there. Anyway, that's where they had baseball games, they had teams.

[Elizabeth Conley joins us.]

Rob: Thank you for joining us--Elizabeth Conley. Now your grandmother was named--your mother's mother was named Lizzy...

EC: Lula Elizabeth, wasn't it?

Rob: Which of you two was named after her?

LH: I was supposed to be.

EC: I was. They told me that's where Elizabeth came from.

LH: They told me that's where Louise came from.

EC: I don't have the Louise. You've got the Louise, and I've got the Elizabeth.

LH: I didn't know that.

Rob: Let's talk a little bit about these portraits. Let's start with your mother's parents.

EC: Is that Grandma Archie? Lula Elizabeth, that's the one.

Rob: Where we were when we left off was how and when you came to the Burton Street

community. You both came at the same time?

LH: She was the baby, she was in diapers.

EC: I was born in Hazzard Street, they said. I was born where she was living at the time, in her home on Hazzard Street.

Rob: Do you all know why your folks decided to move from Hazzard Street to West Asheville?

LH: Dad could buy the property. He bought and built the house.

Rob: He bought and built the house--and that was this house here?

LH: Yes, the beginning of this house. The first one he built burned to the ground, right up next to the hedges. Then he built this one back here.

Rob: Do you remember when it burnt to the ground?

LH: She was a baby.

EC: I was here. Edna and Willie...There's two years between.

LH: Three years....I'm three years older than Edna, and Edna is nine months older than Willie. Willie is two years older than you.

Rob: So you easily could have been around six years old.

LH: Yes, I started school up here.

Rob: So that's about right. So it's about 1920, then.

EC: I was born in 1919.

Rob: And that photo of your great-grandfather. This photo is from about 1920, I figure. He's about 80 years old.

LH: He was 81 when he died.

Rob: Because when you all moved here, your great-grandfather was still living over on Hazzard Street.

LH: That's the only address my grandmother had that I knew about.

Rob: You say your father had a wagon and a buggy. That's wealthy, isn't it?

LH: I don't know.

Rob: He didn't build his own wagon and buggy, did he?

EC: My husband built his trailer.

Rob: (to Louise) Do you remember coming here at age six?

LH: Yes. I was riding in the buggy with my mother. She was driving. And when we got here, we didn't know the name of the street, and my mother told us to go right here and find out the name of the street. I remember we went running up the street. Somebody up the street told us Fayetteville. We came back down the street saying, "Faceville! Faceville!"

EC: You ought to tell Becky what you know. My daughter-in-law has been begging for something about the family.

Rob: So you found Faceville.

LH: Fayetteville.

Rob: Right.

LH: I remember the day we came out here on a Monday. My daddy was driving the wagon and my mother the buggy, and the children were in the buggy with her. We must have had two horses. My daddy was a drayman. That's what they call transferring now.

EC: Moving, hauling, all kinds of stuff.

Rob: He moved people's possessions and homes?

EC: Anything they had.

LH: He had business cards.

Rob: He was a strong man.

LH: He brought that piano here. I was six years old when he brought that piano.

EC: I know he must have had some help.

LH: Daddy used to carry stoves and...on his back.

Rob: Did he move most of the families who came into Burton Street here?

LH: Yes, all of us.

EC: No, that's our family. He didn't move all of the families who came down here.

Rob: They didn't engage him or pay him to do that?

EC: Well, if they had him haul something home for them, I'm sure he was compensated, but it wasn't that he was the person who moved every family like a moving van. They might want someone to pick up an icebox for them, and they asked Mr. Bell to pick it up.

LH: He was so good-hearted. He would move people, and when he would get through, do you know what they would tell him? Bell, thank you, we'll pay you Saturday. My mother said, if she could collect all the money...He had a little book.

EC: I don't know where they got that myth, I'll pay you Saturday.

LH: I know Daddy said that. Mama told us that they would tell Daddy, I'll pay you Saturday. And they said, you'll have the money when they got enough. He said, "That's all right. I'll wait for it." And he loved to be sure that all the children could get to school. And you know, Stephens-Lee was the only public high school for blacks in Buncombe County. Students came from Black Mountain and Weaverville and everywhere around. And so when the children out here in West Asheville--carfare was only five cents, and they didn't have five cents. Jethro Hooper said if it hadn't been for daddy, he couldn't have gotten to high school. [?] right at the head of Burton Street at Haywood Road, all the children who were going to town, to school. "Would there be anyone else?" "[Name of missing person] not here, Mr. Bell," and he'd wait. They had what you call a dray yard, right below the police department at [?] and Spruce, I believe, right there behind that barbecue place. There's a whole block in there. There where they stood out all day long. [Her father was the only black drayman. The other draymen loved to come home with him to eat because they loved his wife's cooking.]

Rob: And they stood out there waiting for...

LH: For work. He knew where to go and knew where to [?]

Rob: We have some old photos of wagons assembling in that area. Now, when you came here, the house wasn't built yet,

LH: This house, but he built the house that's up there next to...

Rob: So first he built it, and then he brought you here.

LH: He bought this property, I know, and I know he built this house.

EC: That was after the other one burned down.

Rob: The house that burned down was possibly built by someone who came before? Now, were the Pearsons already here when you came?

LH: I don't know. I doubt it though because...

EC: They came from Shiloh and--you know where that store-looking building is across from the center? That was where they lived. There was a house right in behind there, which was the head of this end of the street. They never lived down here.

Rob: How many other houses were on this street when you came down?

LH: Not many. I don't know. Most of these houses were built. Mac Barton and his daddy owned all this property.

EC: The Longs were there. Next to the church was there.

LH: On this side of the church.

EC: I always grew up knowing that Miss Mitchell was here. I've always known the Bruells were there. As far as I know, when I was old enough to play with Evelyn [MacMickens] and [?], they were there.

LH: Mr. Bruell worked on the railroad. He was down at the roundhouse....There were four or five houses in this neighborhood. The Blacks lived there, didn't they. That's one-two-three-four-five...

Rob: So, Lula never lived in West Asheville?

LH: No....My grandmother was a domestic worker. She worked for the lady [Mrs. Guthrie] who owned the Palace Royal. That's up there near Pack Square. It was a department store, more or less. She sold not only clothes, but linens. She had a daughter that was the same age as I was. Every time she'd get something in the store, she'd get the same thing for me to give grandmother.

EC: How come I never did get anything but the beads(?) back then...[not clothes]?

LH: You're getting them now.

Rob: She worked in the home of the woman who owned Palace Royal.

LH: She worked in the home. Grandmother not only worked for her. She worked in a lot of places.

Rob: She worked where else?

LH: Mrs. Guffey is the woman who owned Palace Royal. Her daughter's name is Adelaide who was the same age I was. Adelaide and I wore the same clothes.

EC: He was asking about grandmother. What did she do?

LH: She was a domestic worker.

Rob: And your grandfather?

EC: He was dead before we really knew--I mean I didn't even know anything about him.

LH: And my mother didn't know anything about him. She [grandmother] had two children--she was pregnant with my aunt. She died about ten years ago. She never got to see her father. And my mother was just four years old.

Rob: How old would you say they are in this photo, about thirty years old?

[Louise and Elizabeth look for information on the back of the framed print.]

Rob: What do you know about what it was like when your great-grandfather was living in Buncombe County in 1840?

LH: Well, I'll tell you. They lived in what we call the country, Leicester. That's where she was born, in Leicester. That's where he lived.

Rob: Where did they live in Leicester?

LH: I don't know.

Rob: They lived on a farm out there. Did they live on their own farm?

LH: Yes.

Rob: So they had become freeholders in 1840?

LH: I know one thing, they were pretty good livers. My mother's people are buried out there at the--they were Methodists. My family started out as Methodists. We are Baptists. The church where my mother's family is buried is called Brick Church.

Rob: Are there Parks buried out there at Brick Church?

LH: Peggy Bennett is the head of it. She works at the Leicester Post Office....

Rob: Is it a black cemetery, a white cemetery?

LH: It's mixed.

Rob: Did you have contact with that community after you moved into the Burton Street area?

LH: No, I don't have contacts except that I send up fifty dollars a year for the cemetery. That's all I do. And I go to homecoming. I haven't been in about three years.

Rob: Because you have family buried out in that cemetery.

LH: My brother's out there. My daddy's out here.

Rob: So people continue to be buried out there now?

LH: I can't say whether they're going to be buried in there because I don't care. I'd as soon be cremated as not. And I haven't made that...will yet.

Rob: We have another photograph here. This looks mighty old. These are your father's parents. And they lived out in Weaverville?

LH: Yes. They lived in West Buncombe.

[There's talk about whether Weaverville is West Buncombe, and the speakers settle on calling it the Weaverville area.]

Rob: This is George and Annie Weaver...

LH: Did you ever hear of Stockville?

EC: That's in Pennsylvania.

Rob: There's a community called Stockville?

LH: I don't know. I just thought of it.

Rob: That's George and Annie Weaver Bell. When you all moved here, they continued to stay in Weaverville?

LH: No, when we moved here, they were dead. They were dead when I was born.

Rob: Do you recall what Grandpa George did?

LH: Somebody's been calling me--a white person. He's been trying to get me to help him get some information. I said, I can't tell you that. He got mad at me one time, he said I just didn't want to try to remember. I tell him I didn't know.

Rob: He tried to bully you into remembering?

LH: Yes.

Rob: That's a good technique.

EC; That might work better [laughing].

Rob: So you all moved here around 1920, and then there were ten years before the Depression.

LH: '26, that was the year I started--I must have been 11 or 12 years old--that's when I started at Allen.

Rob: Did your family prosper during the 1920s?

EC: I guess we were about as well off as anybody else around here.

Rob: Did you see the community increase in size?

LH: Yes. We had been able to see the West Asheville community grow.

Rob: [to Elizabeth] Now, you remember those years, too, now, because you would have been up to about ten years old when the Depression came.

EC: Well, I guess I didn't know it as being depressed or not depressed. I just went along...

LH: I was in school. When I came home, she was getting married...

EC: I was fifteen years old.

Rob: I'm looking at your childhoods in the 1920s. Would you say that was a good decade for the Burton Street community?

LH: I'll tell you the truth. When I was nine years old, I was wearing a nine dollar hat. I remember that. I purchased that from a shop on Battery Park Hill. My grandmother went up there...

EC: You were the rich one in the family.

Rob: A nine dollar hat?

LH: She bought me a nine dollar hat.

EC: She was the one who was getting them passed down from the girl of the owner of the store.

Rob: Where's the hat? Is it hanging on that rack over there?...
I want to ask you, the ledger book that your father kept, is that still around?

LH: [going to hat rack] Wait a minute, there's not a thing over here that's not modern.

Rob: Louise, do you have any of your father's books or papers?

LH: I don't know. If you could see my room back there where all the papers are...

EC: I didn't know anything about the Great Depression. I was always happy. I know we ate. Sometimes, remember, we used to have Raymond and Daddy come and say, "Where's the meat." And mama laughed because she had been out working and they didn't give her the chicken. You all didn't know that you could get juice and stuff out of chicken feet and necks, and Mama made the gravy.

LH: ...[quoting somebody talking to her] "Why don't you eat, you don't like meat?" I said, "I'd rather have gravy than meat any day."

EC: And Mama always had a little garden out there, and there's fresh vegetables.

LH: We always had a garden. We had about every kind of animal you could have on a small place. We even had a goat one time. You remember the goat.

Rob: When did you stop having animals?

EC: My children came along and picked up the habit. I think they had every kind that you could think about.

Rob: Did you have it on your own property or were there some common areas?

LH: Right out in the back yard. They were our pets. Rabbits, chickens...

Rob: Where are the animals now?

EC: We don't have any.

LH: We always had a dog.

EC: My animals are ceramic.

LH: Daddy had hogs, but they didn't keep...they used to have a branch down here at Patton Avenue. I didn't have to go feed the hogs even. I didn't wash a diaper in my life. My

grandmother would do it.

Rob: You mean Lula?

LH: Yes.

Rob: But I thought she was living over at Hazzard Street.

LH: You see, I lived with her.

Rob: After you had a child--what was your child's name?

LH: Vernelle.

Rob: You took Vernelle over to grandma?

LH: I lived with my grandmother. I got married, and grandmother took me--in fact, she didn't want me to get married.

EC: You know where Jesse Ray funeral home is?

Rob: Yes.

LH: That was once the Asheville Colored Hospital. That's where my daughter was born.

EC: Janice asked me that the other day, and I didn't know the answer to that. I've got to tell her that.

Rob: The same building was, not just the site?

LH: Yes. That used to be Dr. Bryant, old Dr. Bryant's building, and then after that it was Mount Zion Parsonage, and after that it was Asheville Colored Hospital.

EC: Is that where Daddy and Wade...

LH: Yes, yes.

EC: Janice wants to know that.

Rob: Most of the mothers in the community worked full-time, is that right?

EC: ...took washing and carried it into the home and then carried the clothes back.

Rob: So, they were able to be with their kids and do some work?

LH: And my mother would go [to clean a house] sometimes, and stop by and buy one these--they had these candy canes, long candy canes. She'd buy one and she broke it into the number of children that she had at that time--equal pieces--and give us all our piece of candy.

EC: You should have seen Mama divide an orange up according to the number of children in the home. But we always got a whole orange at Christmas in the stocking.

LH: We had books every--my grandmother gave us--we had to have a book for Christmas to read. I had one sister, this one up here, when she got her books, she read all them all before she went back to school the next day.

Rob: What kind of books were they?

LH: School books.

Rob: Text books?

LH: Yes, text books.

Rob: Do you recall any of the other books that you got as a child, your favorite books to read?

EC: They got all those books up at the library at the Burton Street Center...They have oodles of all those books. Dick and Tom and Jane or whatever.

LH: Yes, we gave them all to the community.

Rob: So, what did you all do for fun? When you were kids, the school year was very different from the summer?

EC: There used to be a creek right down behind the highway. The boys would slip off into it. They could skinny-dip.

LH: My brother went to the cave and the creek.

Rob: Cave? Where's the cave now? It's been blasted?

EC: Well, the whole thing's torn up by the highway there.

LH: And they're going to bring this highway down through here now.

Rob: What do you think that kids should miss most about not having the kind of community that you had when you were growing up?

EC: I don't know what they miss because they have things supervised and TV. They didn't get

out on the street and do the jumping and stuff.

Rob: It's more supervised now.

EC: It is now. It was just...families--a little girl out there and I and whoever else...you get a little bit older, you talk to the boys, you walk up and down the street a little bit. You get a little older, you steal their mail, their love letters, and peep out the windows and listen to them.

Rob: Do you think they'd miss the farms? Gardens....

LH: They let me bring a pail of white rats on [?] evening after a community program to carry on some experiments with. I was supposed to get white mice and then raise some from them and feed them certain diets.

EC: And they got loose and made a nest.

LH: I didn't know it til I heard that the people up the street and down the street and all around had white rats.

Rob: Did you get to see your father much?

[coughing]

LH: We used to go on straw rides.

Rob: Hay rides?

LH: The children would come here and say, Mr. Bell, take us for a ride.

EC: He always had hay. He had a horse.

LH: And that's a horse stall he had behind that door there.

Rob: So you went on hay rides, you passed love letters back and forth, you went down to the creek and you swam.

EC: The boys did that, the girls very seldom did.

Rob: What were the girls doing during that time?

EC: Well, playing with dolls, I guess.

LH: I was making a quilt or sewing. Everybody in my family was learning to be domesticated.

Rob: The girls were home working in the house and the boys were down by the creek.

EC: I don't know necessarily we were working in the house. We just didn't go down and swim. We probably played whatever we played. I can tell you about a dangerous one we did. You remember mumblety-peg? We had the best game. You take an ice pick, and you throw it, and when you know how to throw it, you catch it in the ground. You get points and stuff like that. Throw it up and catch it on your hand. I thought I shouldn't say that, but that was one of the best games.

Rob: Were you good at it?

EC: Oh, yes.

Rob: Were you the best at it?

EC: I don't know. I doubt that. Turn that thing, it would go right in the ground.

LH: ...I didn't play it.

Rob: If your parents caught you doing it, what would they have done.

EC: That was one of our games.

Rob: Okay. You read books.

LH: My daddy made us take--did you take music?

EC: You're the only one who got to take the music. ...I got out of school and paid for it.

LH: Edna did because she played for the church up there.

Rob: Which church was that?

LH: St. Paul's.

EC: Edna played for the church? You could hardly hear it. Boom boom boom boom.

Rob: You went on shopping trips--at least you did. You got that nine dollar hat, what was the occasion?

LH: I don't even remember the hat, to tell the truth. I just remember everybody talking about it.

EC: She mentioned how we all learned to sew and everything. I remember my first dress--well,

I call it mammy-made. I refused to go to the junior-senior prom in a mammy-made dress. Everybody sewed. And everybody started sewing but(?) me. And I just wanted a bought dress.

Rob: People could tell.

LH: They had five girls, and she really could sew.

EC: I was even sewing. Back when I went to high school, I had to take to take a dress [class] because I refused to baste. So the teacher got tired of working with me and let me make the dress. As you sew, so shall you rip.

LH: She was my science teacher. Most of our high school teachers were missionaries from the north.

Rob: It sounds like you were led to have dreams that went beyond maybe what other children--it sounds like you all had advantages.

LH: We did.

EC: We used to play with the Cabin Kids.

LH: Back in the movies. They just got out of Hollywood. One girl was born right here.

EC: There was a little girl here you used to play with.

LH: The Gambles.

Rob: The Cabin Kids? And they were in movies?

LH: And they traveled. They were from Asheville....One little girl was born right in back of us.

EC: I sang with them for a little bit, and when they got ready to go to Hollywood, Mama wouldn't let me leave home.

Rob: This was in the 1920s.

EC: It was the same time that we were playing out there in the street. It was the little Hall children.

LH: It was three children who belonged to the Hall family, and Mr. and Mrs. Hall were the ones that started them out. And they just picked up any other children they could get. And they went all the way to Hollywood.

EC: Miss Hall took her three children and Ruth Gamble to Hollywood.

LH: That was the only one that could go.

Rob: How did they get the name Cabin Kids?

EC: My children got the word that I sang with this group that was here, and they went around telling everybody that I sang with the Cabin Kids. Now, I have this authentic keepsake plate that my son sent to me. I told him, I don't want that. I used them, that group of singers as baby-sitters, I'll sit them in front of the television and let them watch the kids. I wasn't interested in them. But earlier, I sang with a little group when everybody went out and sang.

LH: Their first cousin belongs to our church now, he was in it. He grew up right down here. I tried to get him to give the history of the Chavis family. He married a girl that lived back of me over in East Asheville. [?] Summey. She taught in New York City. She taught music.

EC: Who was that little boy--Peewee--the little boy that always had this one little twig of hair right up at the top.

LH: One of the Cabin Kids?

EC: The Cabin Kids was Miss Hall's little group who went out and sang with this larger group. And that's the group I have the picture of.

Rob: You have a picture of the Cabin Kids?

EC: I have an authentic picture of the larger group. The Cabin Kids that [I knew], they are not in that picture. I wasn't with the group that got as far--off of Federal Street.

Rob: Does anybody have picture of the West Asheville Cabin Kids?

LH: I tell you, the cousin lives over on Mar...

EC: Samuel Chavis....You know how you might be playing the piano and you have one or two children who sing, and she sang along with everyone. I'm in the group, the pal to that particular--surely, so I sat there and sang the same songs, too, like whatever it was. And it didn't go much farther than that. And when she got ready to move, after the matter of separation with her husband and everything, she left, took the children to California, and they sang.

Rob: Were they stars?

LH: Yes, they were stars in their own right.

EC: They sang well enough that they sang with this professional group that I have the picture of. But I do not have their pictures.

Rob: Probably most of the publicity shots would not have been of them.

EC: They would definitely not include them. And I have nothing. And I have nothing from the little play we did out here.

Rob: When did you do that little play?

EC: I was a little bitty kid--young enough to be out there jumping rope because the incident happened on Easter Monday one year, the two of them did not go home on time. They were out here, right around the corner, behind the park. And they had to have an excuse--I mentioned, [we were] jumping rope with grape vines. Edna and another girl who were older out there, they told [the story to] my sister. They [the other two girls, the Hall girls] went home and told their mother. They stopped in the park, scratched their own faces, and went home and said that Edna and her friend did it. And the mother came up here and jumped on my mother. And it was from that Easter to the following Easter they told it. And Miss Hall came up and apologized for them. We were very young children.

Rob: I remember doing something like that.

EC: Kids do that.

Rob: Why did they scratch their faces?

EC: They knew their mother was going to scratch their behinds. They were in trouble.

Rob: For doing what?

EC: For being late. And they knew what they were going to get.

LH: I never heard of that.

Rob: That much of a punishment for being late?

EC: That's what they were going to go through. They felt they had a reason to do something, they had to prove their lying.

Rob: You were all putting on a play? I'm making a list in my mind of all the games and things you all did as kids. Sometimes you got together and put on plays?

EC: They...just had fun.

Rob: Just play as in have fun.

EC: Could have been mumblety-peg, jump rope, hop-scotch, whatever we played, it was not like a production. It was just playing. Children having fun. Play house, whatever you wanted to play.

Rob: Did you build...

EC: Sand house

Rob: ...little club houses?

EC: I don't remember a club house.

LH: Sand boxes.

EC: We didn't have no sand box. We had some sand out in the dirt. We had dirt.

LH: I'll tell you what they did. They built a pond in the back yard back here. Had fishing.

EC: Who did that?

LH: You for one.

EC: Me for the one.

LH: THE one. [laughs]

EC: Me and my boyfriends did that. It was beautiful. That was later years.

LH: I'll tell you who used to come out here all the time. He's pastor now of Nazareth First Baptist Church. He used to come out here all the time. And he told me that he was mad because we filled the pond up. And I said, I didn't know anything about a pond.

EC: It was beautiful. Like I said, my boyfriends carried the big stones, and Daddy helped them with the digging and everything. And it was basically so I could be outside with daddy and I didn't have to wash dishes.

LH: Anytime anything got started around him, my mother would help, I don't care what it was. She just loved to help do anything.

Rob: That's sweet. And she loved being outside, too?

LH: Yes.

EC: There were beautiful flowers outside, too.

Rob: I see sunflowers. I don't see as many as you're describing. I don't see the pond. Why...

LH: The pond was out here in the back. And I had had a garden over it. In fact, I have some onions...

EC: They put dirt in it and covered it up. It takes so much time to take care of it. For instance, my mama used to go to Pennsylvania every year and we had to go back, and...Mama would come and start the garden over again. She left it die! And everybody said a big rock garden started. We didn't have time to fool with that. Children. Teaching. Business. We put dirt up there and moved those rocks up and all my husband had to do is have it moved. It wasn't as pretty as it was. It's pretty, the big flowers out there.

Rob: Let's talk a little bit more about Lizzie here. Your mother lived to 102. She [your grandmother] lived quite long also, didn't she?

LH: My daughter is fifty... I was a teacher at school when my grandmother died. That must have been--in 1965, I came home. Vernelle was born in 1947.

EC: Okay, she's just two years older than Malvin.

Rob: So, Lizzie died probably...

EC: When I had Malvin, she brought Vernelle to me. Malvin was two years younger. Vernelle must have been at least three by then.

LH: Grandma sent her over to Mountain Street--it was Mountain Street then, Mountain Street School. You know that's where the board of education has their offices. Let's see...

Rob: She was alive in 1950.

LH: Grandmother died in about 1957 or 58.

EC: Yes, she was living when daddy died, which was '51; she was there when Willie died, which was '52, and Mr. Conley died at 40 years in '53. She was living at least until fifty...

LH: '57 or '58.

Rob: And I figure since Doshia was born around 1890, then, if she was twenty when she had Doshia--was Doshia the youngest, the oldest?

LH: The oldest.

Rob: The oldest. So she might have been about twenty when she had Doshia, let's just say. That would have made her born very roughly around 1870. So she may have lived til about--that's a good age, 87.

LH: Yes, she was about that when she died.

Rob: So she lived quite a life.

LH: Yes she did.

Rob: Now, was she a talker? Did she like to tell stories?

LH: My grandmother was a quiet lady. She was a worker, though. She was a church worker also. She belonged to Hopkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, that's that church up on College Street. She was a stewardess.

EC: Wasn't she in one of those lodge things?

LH: Yes...she was a lodge worker.

Rob: You knew her quite well because you lived with her when you were a child and then you lived with her when you had Vernelle.

LH: I was away teaching most of the time, you see. I was in Burke County.

Rob: Teaching, and she was helping you raise...

LH: I'd come home on the weekends.

Rob: Elizabeth, Janice and Malvin are your two children? And Janice is interested in the family history?

EC: It's my daughter-in-law that's been trying to dig--she really got a whole lot interested in it when she found out she's married to a Conley...

Rob: She'd probably be interested in knowing what is it that your grandmother passed on by example, by work, through wisdom or teaching...

EC: Tell the truth.

Rob: through character.

LH: Yes, character. Let's say character.

Rob: What about character?

LH: You could depend on her, for one thing. If she said she'd do something...She went to Connecticut with her family one time...name some other characteristics.

Rob: One of the hardest times in North Carolina history were the 1890s. Maybe not in this area--but for black people in North Carolina, it seems that there was more...

LH: It was rough. But I didn't have sense enough to know it.

Rob: Maybe it was rough for you in the 20s and 30s, the 40s and 50s. But I'm thinking about her when she first starting having children in the 1890s. The Wilmington Race Riots were 1898. Did she tell stories about that?

LH: She didn't have time, I don't think, because I wasn't there. She might have, but I wasn't at home to listen. When I'd come in on Friday, I'd be so tired.

Rob: You say she was a quiet person.

LH: Yes, she was very quiet...I remember her saying: as I grow older, let me grow sweeter. Everybody loved her. She was called the "mother of the hill."

Rob: And which hill is that, up there in East Asheville?

LH: On Hazzard.

Rob: Would you say there's some history that the church might have in connection with her since she was such an active church worker?

LH: No.

Rob: Were there church bulletins that were put out, things like that?

LH: I don't know, but I know one thing. At that time, they had envelopes, way back then, because every Sunday, even if she didn't go to church, she had me fill out her [envelope with cash], to put the money in, on Saturday. She didn't miss a Sunday...and if she didn't get to go to church, she'd send it by [?]

EC: We had a baby-sitter.

Rob: And they called her the mother of the hill because she took care of all the children?

EC: For instance, my friends(?)...I say grandmother and everybody--well my friends would say grandmother. For instance, my daughter's friend calls me mom.

LH: Well, I just need to say, she was just good to everybody. She didn't take care of the children because she didn't have time. Now, there was a lady who took care of the children. When grandmother died--you remember Aunt Maggie that lived above us?

EC: Took care of what children?

LH: All the children. Anybody who had a child. Mine came in there, the time of the funeral, most of them from Philadelphia. My nieces, they brought their children, and all they did was gather them right there and up to Aunt Maggie.

EC: You're talking about when she died.

LH: I talking about all the time. Edith, too. She reared her great nieces and nephews. She reared them.

Rob: You look at this picture--look at her. She's looking straight ahead. Her neck is very...

LH: She was a beautiful person, I tell you.

Rob: Yes. And she helped families, is that one of the ways she was the mother of the hill? Did she go around when families were in trouble?

LH: My mother did...

EC: Wait a minute. Mother went around and did what?

LH: Mama was a Red Cross volunteer.

EC: To the extent that she went around and helped...

LH: No, she didn't go. Mama did her work in...that meant you folded bandages and things like that. She was a Red Cross volunteer, she and Miss Pearson and somebody else out here.

Rob: So, the Red Cross was another way aside from the church to be involved in the community.

EC: You asked about her [indicating portrait]. She's talking about her mama.

Rob: I understand.

LH: I don't know about what she did, and I'll tell you frankly, except she worked and paid her money. As an officer in the church, she was always an officer in the church--I was too young to even know.

Rob: There's a story there because giving money to a church on a regular basis would bring a lot of appreciation, certainly, but it wouldn't give you the title of mother of the hill.

LH: I didn't ever get that. Because, see, my daddy was a Baptist, and my mother joined Mount Zion with my daddy, and that's where we started out. They started out in Methodist. All the people out in Leicester were Methodist.

Rob: Was it a problem when Methodists and Baptists got married?

LH: I don't think so

Rob: Did the church services pretty much resemble each other.

LH: They had weddings, my grandmother...everyone in this family who has been married has had a wedding. Her two girls had weddings, my mother...

EC: The services were very much the same. They take communion just a little differently.

LH: Methodists go up [?} and we don't. We sit still and let them pass it to us.

Rob: What about the dancing? The Baptists weren't allowed to dance, right?

EC: Are we saying shout or dance?

Rob: Let's say shout. I was saying dancing.

EC: You were saying go to dances socially.

Rob: That's right. Were Baptists stricter?

LH: I don't think so.

EC: Like I say, I married a Methodist, and he came to dance so much here.

Rob: You danced in this house?

LH: Yes, indeed. They had dances galore in this house.

EC: We danced right here. It's just a matter of our games would be here. In my particular instance of dancing, it was family. One played the piano, and the other could dance, and the one that could play the piano liked me, and it was the brother who danced. And the brother who played the piano wouldn't play unless I danced with him some more. As far as dancing, Daddy would always say, he always knew where we were. Dancing was some of the things we did back then. There just would be five or six kids and it would be like a dance hall.

Rob: Where did you get your music from?

EC: The piano.

Rob: I mean the sheet music. Was it sheet music?

EC: No, no. That Horne played piano. His name was Horne.

Rob: He improvised?

EC: No, he was a musician.

Rob: And what was his name?

EC: Haywood Horne was his name.

Rob: I've heard of him. Haywood Horne.

EC: His sister-in-law was...

LH: Gwen comes up to the center all the time.

Rob: His sister-in-law? So, that would be his brother's wife?

LH: Doug.

EC: Doug was a lawyer here in Asheville.

Rob: Doug Horne. And Doug Horne married...

EC: Gwendolyn Horne. Gwendolyn Penland Horne.

Rob: They're part of the Burton Street community.

LH: She doesn't live out here.

EC: But she grew up out here.

Rob: The Hornes did.

LH: They're back over there, right on Penland Avenue.

Rob: That's h-o-r-n.

LH and EC: E.

Rob: Like Lena.

EC: Yes.

Rob: And Haywood is H-?

EC: H-a-y-w-o-o-d.

Rob: It's quite remarkable...

EC: And in their family, who was that policeman?

LH: Delaney. Delaney's the oldest one. He was the first black policeman in town.

Rob: Do you know what we're going to do, and you all are really helping tremendously. I bet we can just recreate the community on paper, get all those names up there, and show all the connections. Wouldn't that be tremendous?

LH: It would be if we could do it.

Rob: We have Delaney Horne, the first black policeman in Asheville?

LH: That's her great-granddaughter that he married.

EC: Not Delaney.

LH: Gilbert Sligh, he was the first black policeman. Delaney came right afterward.

EC: This fellow that she married was a Petty.

LH: That's Gilbert's great grandson.

Rob: Who are we talking about?

EC: I don't know what she's trying to explain who my granddaughter has married. She's saying Sligh. Her name is not Sligh.

LH: Gilbert was the first black policeman in town. Delaney Horne was one of the first black policeman, but he wasn't THE first policeman. Gilbert died. Gilbert was still working when Delaney was appointed.

Rob: So, you granddaughter--by Janice or by Malvin?

EC: Bristol, Leon Bristol. It was Janice's daughter who has married somebody and his name is Petty.

Rob: And how is Petty related to this policeman?

LH: Daughter-in-law. Gil's son. Gilbert Sligh's daughter. And Michael Petty is Gilbert Sligh's grandson.

EC: I hope we're getting this right, because I remember somebody wrote some stuff there when my husband died. I had to wait until after he got...

LH: I know this. I know Gilbert Sligh's grandson is Nikki's cousin.
Rob: Okay, let me ask three more questions and we'll stop for today. Janice's daughter is named...

EC: Her name is Nikki.

Rob: Haywood Horne, the musician, did he make recordings?

LH: No. What did he do up there? Was he in the Veteran's Hospital?

Rob: So, he never made recordings.

LH: Ask Gwendolyn.

Rob: The last question is--let me try to get one more little story about Lula here before I leave. Lula spent a lot of time with Vernelle. Is there a lesson that she passed on to Vernelle?

LH: Vernelle was one of the most considerate and most--she's humble.

END OF TAPE